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THE MESSIAHSHIP IN THE MIND OF JESUS

By

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THESIS

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Preface

When any one writes a paper of this type, a decent respect for whoever may read it compels him to advance some reason for its existence. The author of this little treatise makes no pretensions toward scholarship nor originality of viewpoint or treatment. He no more expects it to make even the slightest ripple on the surface of New Testament criticism or theological theory than he expects to be transferred over night back into the days when his remote ancestors lived in the trees to avoid the dinosaurs. The opinions herein contained are frankly second-hand, and the theories set forth are all widely, if not favorably, known. Also the author is all too well aware that the literature already produced on this subject is exhaustive, if not exhausting, and that there is a pretty general agreement, on the part of those best qualified to weigh the evidence, to disagree in many important aspects.

Therefore why write this at all? If all that could be said has been said, and resulted in a sharp difference of opinion, why should another article be added to the field? Simply this: about a year ago I was first introduced to this problem, and was immediately struck with the wide divergence of opinion to be found, and also with the overwhelming importance from an exegetical standpoint, of

some working hypothesis. There was not on that occasion sufficient time to look into the subject with any real satisfaction, but since then I have been gathering the material which is contained in this paper. It is by no means voluminous, yet it has involved some little effort, and has also enabled me to reach a conclusion which, while tentative and none too clear-cut in many of its details, will serve me as a starting-point for future work. Therefore it is of considerable value to me, if to no one else, and for that reason have I written it.

- P. K. S.

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Introduction

One of the problems which is always confronting the student of the life of Jesus is the necessity of interpreting in some satisfactory way the seemingly conflicting evidence as to how Jesus estimated his own personality, just what relationship, in his own opinion, he bore to God, and to that Kingdom of God whose coming was always in the forefront of his thoughts. For it is a problem whose solution profoundly affects our estimate of his personality, of the Kingdom which he wished to establish, of his ethics, and in short of practically the whole message of Christianity as it is to be found in the synoptic gospels. It is a crucial problem whose importance can scarcely be overestimated and whose challenge must be met if we are to have any consistent interpretation of the Master or of his teachings. We must at least reach some tentative conclusion which we may use as a basis for further studies.

Please note the word "tentative." It is used advisedly. The Christian Church has from the very beginning proclaimed him as the Messiah and insisted that he so considered himself. Not only that, but even today the vast majority of Christians consider him the divine Son of God, miraculously born, during his life here on earth omniscient, omnipotent, and consciously a part of the Godhead coordinate with the Father, and sure to return in physical form at some future date, more or less vague, which is the end of the

world, to judge the quick and the dead, and then and there establish the ideal kingdom wherein everything will be even more perfect than the poor mind of man can possibly conceive. To repeat, it is probably safe to maintain that the majority of Christians hold pretty well to that conception of Jesus, and believe that he so regarded himself. Others, not so sympathetic towards Christianity, have accepted this reasoning as proving in the light of history that Jesus was insane, or, as the most charitable verdict, a self-deluded fool. Still others have insisted that many of the sayings attributed to him are not authentic, and that he claimed himself to be no more than a prophet promulgating new ethical teachings. And many, many more theories have there been, set forth at various lengths and with various insistence; containing various degrees of reasonableness and truth and receiving various degrees of support and approval. And all have claimed to be supported by thoroughgoing and impartial scholarship. And the extremes have not always been advocated by hare-brained and unbalanced enthusiasts, but not infrequently by men of real ability and no little judgment, who have been able to make out good cases for their theories. Therefore, the word "tentative" is used advisedly. Many of these theories, and some of them well thought out and reasonably set forth, have been superseded by modern scholarship, but there is even now no one theory which holds the field without rather serious opposition. Our study may bring us to some more or less definite

conclusion, but we must beware of considering the case decided once for all.

With these few words on the importance of the problem, and this warning as to the conflict of opinions to be found in regard to it, let us turn to the matter itself, and consider briefly the belief or beliefs concerning the Messiah current in Judaism at the time of Jesus.

I

THE MESSIANISM OF THE JEWS

It is generally admitted by all who do not approach the problems of the gospels from a purely supernaturalistic point of view, that Jesus was profoundly affected in his beliefs by the thought of his time. Even those who do insist on this supernaturalistic view-point are willing to admit that these matters were of great influence in determining the way in which he set forth and expounded his principles to his auditors and disciples, for in no other way could he have made his thoughts hit home to them. In either case, therefore, it will be well worth our while to try and discover just what were the teachings and expectations of the Judaism of that time in regard to the character and the task of the Messiah.

This is not so simple a task as might at first be supposed. There was more than one theory as to the Messiah's person and mission in the faith of Judaism. Just how far back the roots of the doctrine go we can not say. Even Amos, the first of the prophets whose direct words we have, centers his thought upon the "Day of Jahveh." To his mind it is darkness and not light, a day in which Jahveh will visit upon the Hebrews all their iniquities. It is obviously, to his insight, just the opposite of what the Hebrews looked forward to with such joyful expectation; in other

words, the Hebrews were then expecting a time when Jahveh would manifest his power by leading them to victory over all their foes and establishing them in a position of economic and political supremacy over all the world. Gradually this expectation changed and developed under the impetus of the continued political misfortunes of the Hebrews, but chiefly in the inclusion of new details and refinements in particular aspects, for it was still conceived of as a day of triumph for the Jews, or at least for the righteous among the Jews, with perhaps -- though all by no means would admit this -- a few righteous Gentiles included, when they should be exalted and the rich and arrogant wicked would be punished for their sins. And even in the time of Jesus, the status of the dead, both righteous and wicked, was in considerable doubt, though apparently it was generally supposed that they would be resurrected, and this belief was certainly gaining ground.

The Messiah was introduced into the fulfilment of this scheme as the agent through which God would accomplish this. It was necessary in the opinion of most of the Jews that there be some individual who should lead the victorious armies of Israel and who should rule the earth when the warfare was over. Others did not admit this necessity, and throughout the history of the Jewish people there were some who expected the coming of the Kingdom by the action of God directly, served perhaps by certain men such as were Joshua or the prophets, but certainly without the mediumship of a

Messiah. It will be necessary to take this belief into consideration in a later place, but just now its mere existence need be noted with the further fact that it was not very widespread.

The Jews, then, in so far as they expected any miraculous kingdom at all, which is almost the same as saying universally, believed that it would be introduced by some peculiar individual whom they called the Messiah. As might have been expected, he was first thought of as an earthly sovereign, for the Kingdom was to be strictly mundane. Even later, when the idea of the Kingdom became more refined, the picture of the Messiah was still that of a monarch such as they had known all their lives. The old Hebrew kingdom reached the height of its power and glory under the rule of David and his son Solomon. At no other time did it even approach the position of power and influence which the patriotic Jew felt sure was its rightful status. Therefore when a picture was drawn of the glorified Israel of the future, it was in terms of the reigns of David and Solomon, and a son of David, who next to Moses was the patron saint of the Jewish peoples, must needs sit upon the throne. So said the prophets, time and again, and the people greeted the prediction with a hearty "Amen!"

As the Son of David, then, the Messiah was to be literally one of royal lineage, the rightful heir to the throne of Israel, and by that very token a man and not a divine supernatural being. Yet not a mere man. The kingdom

for which they looked was an ideal kingdom, and how can there be an ideal kingdom without an ideal monarch, even if he be the descendant of the greatest and most perfect ruler in the history of his people? And how can any man be perfect without some unusual divine dispensation? And so the Son of David who should reestablish the Jewish nation in power and glory with the aid of God, and with the further divine aid extend its sway over the whole earth, was to be endowed with almost supernatural power and righteousness. He should be in constant and close communication with God, he should be wise far beyond the fabled wisdom of Solomon, and his decisions should be just with a justice which was infinitely beyond question. And yet remember that he was to be the son of David, the fulfilment of national hopes, the restorer of the Jewish nation; and the Gentiles, if they were not utterly destroyed in the catastrophes and conflicts attending the establishment of the Kingdom, were more in the position of tolerated aliens than unquestioned citizens of the Kingdom. Or they may have obtained their citizenship at great price, but as for the Jew, he was a citizen born and a Patrician to boot, and therefore a privileged character. For the King was to be the King of the Jews.

There was another type of Messiah who for some time was looked for with hopeful expectancy. This was the Levitic Messiah. He was essentially much the same as the Davidic Messiah, and the conception developed for much the same reason -- political and military success of members of the tribe

of Levi. These were the Maccabees. While the Jewish nation was at one of the lowest points in all of its political history, and when even its religion seemed about to disappear, under the determined attacks upon it by their overlords, the Hellenic Selucidae, Mattathias Maccabeus and his sons rose in revolt, and with an insignificant army and in the face of apparently insuperable odds, showed such devotion, determination and such military skill, that they established themselves on the throne and saved the very life of their culture and religion. It is one of the most inspiring stories in the long annals of history. And so when their descendant, John Hyrcanus, ascended the throne and combined in himself the three great functions of civil ruler, prophet and High Priest, it is little wonder if many pious Jews thought that the Kingdom was at hand, and that out of the tribe of Levi would come he would establish it. And thus it was that the Levitic Messiah displaced the Son of David. But as often happens, the Maccabees produced no more geniuses, and the descendants of Mattathias and his mighty sons began to dabble in internal and international politics, and to lay more stress on the material fortunes of their own family than on the worship of the Lord. The mummy of the Levitic Messiah was therefore packed away in the literary wrappings prepared while it was still a vital influence, and the lion of Judah was resurrected, and the root out of the stock of Jesse, the Son of David, became again he who would reestablish the glory of Israel.

But it must not be supposed that the exploits of the Maccabees had no lasting influence. Quite the contrary. For as a consequence of their military prowess grew the Messiah who was the Warrior Prince. Previously the Messiah, the Son of David, was chiefly a ruler. That he should have all nations under his dominion was accepted as a matter of course. Whether they submitted of their own free will, or because God placed them there, or by reason of conquest, was by no means certain and in any case was of little moment. But to have him primarily a conqueror was a rather novel conception. To be sure, it is quite possible that the Jews did not look with any overwhelming favor upon a Prince of Peace, at least so far as that title referred to his attitude to the Gentiles who, they felt, had so abused them in the past; but certainly he was to be the divinely appointed ruler who should secure to them and their children the blessings of peace. But now they had tasted of the blood of conquest, and their appetites were whetted for more. So a large group at least, and, if we may judge by the course of events which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem, a constantly increasing group, were bound to be satisfied with nothing less than the conquest of the conquerors, the subjugation of their Hellenic oppressors, or the destruction of the Roman Empire, in order that the Jewish people might set up an even more lordly empire in its stead.

It is obvious that although this is considerably different from the older Son of David concept, the essential

characteristics are by no means incompatible; on the contrary, they may very easily be regarded as complementing each other, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that the two concepts were syncretized so thoroughly that by the time of Jesus they were scarcely separable. For David himself was a mighty man of valor of whom it was sung that he had slain his ten thousands, and who had extended the boundaries of the nation to limits never attained either before or since. And what was more natural than that his descendant, in establishing the even more glorious Israel, should with the aid of God defeat her present oppressors and contemners in the process before putting away the sword to reign in righteousness and glory? It was a consummation devoutly to be wished, and a wish in such a matter was soon metamorphosed into an assured fact.

So far we have dealt with the Messiah as a temporal monarch, a man endowed with many powers and qualities beyond the capacity of all other men to be sure, but still human. But there was another conception of the Messiah. He was termed the Son of Man, a most misleading title, for that is just what he was not. The phrase first appears in Ezekiel, but there it is entirely without any messianic connotation, for it applies to the prophet himself, and was doubtless intended to emphasize the weakness and unimportance of himself and all men in comparison with the power and glory of God. It next appears in Daniel, where the prophet sees "one like unto a son of man...And there was given him dominion, and glo-

ry, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan.7:13-14)

But just previous to this the author has been describing the deeds of four beasts which represent what he believed to be the four great heathen empires -- the Babylonian, the Median, the Persian and the Greek. After them was to come the reign of Israel. It is therefore generally agreed that the son of man as described in Daniel, is a symbol for the divinely established kingdom of Israel whose "dominion is a everlasting dominion" which, in contrast to the others, should never be destroyed. But this conception did not remain static, and there were nearly two hundred years between the date of Daniel and the beginning of Jesus' ministry. During this period several writers took this idea, if not always this very term, and applied it to a definite being, entirely supernatural, and sometimes even conceived of as higher than any of the angels and as pre-existent. Probably the best description of the Son of Man as developed in its full detail is to be found in the Similitudes of Enoch, probably written before 10 B.C. Here are some of the passages describing him.

"And I saw one who had a head of days,
And his head was white like wool,
And with him was another being whose countenance had the appearance of a man,
And his face was full of graciousness, like
one of the holy angels.
And I asked the angel who went with me and

showed me all the hidden things, concerning
that Son of Man, who he was and whence he
was, and why he went with the Head of Days.
And he answered and said unto me:

This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness,
And who revealeth all the treasures of that which is
hidden,

Because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him,
And whose lot hath preeminence before the Lord of
Spirits in uprightness forever."

(I Enoch 46:1-3)

"Yea, before the sun and the signs were created,
Before the stars of the Heaven were made,
His name was named before the Lord of Spirits.

He shall be a staff to the righteous whereon to
stay themselves and not fall,

And he shall be the light of the Gentiles,
And the hope of those who are troubled at heart.

All who dwell on earth shall fall down and worship
before him,

And will praise and bless and celebrate with song
the Lord of Spirits.

And for this reason hath he been chosen and hidden
before Him,

Before the creation of the world and for evermore."

(I Enoch 48:3-6)

"And he sat on the throne of his glory,
And the sum of judgment was given to the Son of Man,
And he caused sinners to pass away and be destroyed
from the face of the earth,

And those who have led the world astray."

(I Enoch 69:27)

From these passages it will readily be seen that Jewish
apocalyptists of the first century before Christ had devel-
oped a figure unique in the history of literature, whether
religious or secular, whether poetic or philosophical. And
one can not avoid recognizing the similarity between this
figure and the conception which the early church had of
one who, according to the records, called himself by this
very title -- supernatural, prëexistent, second only to God
himself in power and dignity, "a staff to the righteous and
the hope of those who are troubled at heart," and destined

to be the judge of the world. It can scarcely be an accident.

These, then, are the two great portraits of the Messiah as the Jews of Jesus' time depicted him -- the temporal monarch and the supernatural Son of Man. Right here, doubtless, some one will object and charge us with overlooking those great passages in II Isaiah describing the Suffering Servant of Jahveh. We have overlooked them, but with intent, for properly they do not belong here, as they are not of a Messianic character. But inasmuch as so many people have regarded them as the finest word portrait we have of the life and mission of Jesus, it is doubtless fitting that we should consider them a moment.

Now there is no question that these passages by the great unknown prophet of the Exile are some of the noblest pieces of religious literature extant. Also there is no question but that they apply with peculiar aptness to Jesus. But there is also no question in the minds of the most capable Old Testament scholars that they were written with the ideal Israel in mind, a nation which was purged of its dross by suffering and was thus in a position to lead other nations to the one true God. To be sure it is by no means impossible that the prophet should have some individual in mind who in a peculiar way fulfilled this same mission, but if so it must have been some example from his own time, or from the history of his people. It has been suggested, and the suggestion is an attractive one, that he might have had Jeremiah in mind.

But whatever the truths contained in these chapters, the fact remains that they did not constitute in the opinion of the Jews a prediction of the Messiah. On the contrary, a ministry of suffering and shame and death was to their thoughts absolutely incompatible with the whole Messianic hope. The two ideas were mutually exclusive. We may leave the question as to whether or not Jesus' own thought was in any way affected by this idea to a later discussion, but we may assert emphatically that the mere idea of a suffering Messiah did not even enter the mind of the Jews of that day.

To repeat, then, after this digression: the Jews had two general conceptions of the Messiah, one portraying him as an earthly sovereign, the other as the supernatural Son of Man. As the first, he might appear in the role of the Son of David, as a member of the tribe of Levi, or as a warrior prince. The son of David as originally conceived, e.g. as in Isaiah, was a prince of peace, and thus at sharp variance with the views of those who expected an all-conquering warrior, but there was a steady and vigorous tendency to merge these two. This was probably the expectation of the common people who felt keenly the oppressive control of their foreign rulers, and was openly and strongly advocated by the Zealots, who were convinced that if they would only begin an active opposition to their heathen rulers, the Lord would see to it that they would not be utterly destroyed, by taking a hand himself and sending his all-conquering Messiah. The Pharisees and others who were in a more comfortable eco-

conomic condition did not look with any favor on such attempts to hurry God into setting up the kingdom. It was too risky, for they had very little to gain and a whole lot to lose. Therefore they were those who tended to entertain the Son of Man conception of the Messiah, and believed that there was nothing man could do which would speed up the arrival of the kingdom. That was entirely in God's hands.

These, then, were the beliefs current in Judaism when Jesus lived and taught. They were the beliefs which were held by the various people with whom he dealt,, and it is scarcely too much to assume that his own ideas of the Messiahship and his relation to it, as well as the language in which he couched those ideas when expounding them to his disciples, were deeply affected if not largely controlled by them.

II

DID JESUS CONSIDER HIMSELF THE MESSIAH?

We have now considered briefly the conceptions of the Messiah which were current during the days of Jesus' ministry. But we have also had cause to notice that there was a considerable, if by no means dominant, group of Jewish thinkers who were imbued with the idea of the coming of the kingdom, but who expected it to be the direct product of God's activity, without the mediacy of any personality which might properly be termed Messianic. And there has been more than one scholar who has insisted that Jesus took to himself an office no higher than that of a prophet, the legitimate spiritual son of the Old Testament prophets, who demanded righteousness and not sacrifice, and vehemently proclaimed the essentially moral character of religion. He was a reformer, perhaps he even thought of himself as a fore-runner of the kingdom, but he was not the Messiah, nor did he so regard himself. So says liberal Judaism, so says Islam, so say some Unitarians and more than one critic of the gospels. What truth is there in this contention? Does the evidence at our disposal prove, or even demonstrate the probability of this thesis, that Jesus did not regard himself as the Messiah at all?

In answering, it must be admitted that if the Messiahship were limited to the office of a mundane ruler, these critics would be able to make up a very good case indeed.

It seems best to discuss this phase of the matter in some - what more detail at a later occasion, but without definitely stating the arguments here, we may agree readily to the possibility of constructing a very plausible argument in - deed on this point. The critical position of those who do insist that Jesus regarded himself as the Messiah, and the point at which the attack of the opposition is therefore directed, is the reported use by Jesus of the title "the Son of Man." This has been called Jesus' "favorite self-designation." It occurs in the synoptic gospels 69 times. The author of the Fourth Gospel uses it twelve times in spite of an obvious preference for the title of the Son of God, while there are three other passages in the New Testament where it may refer to Jesus. It would certainly seem that out of these 69 occurrences in the synoptic gospels, some at least would, in the light of the general interpretation placed upon the phrase, be unimpeachable "self-designations," and in the light of the last chapter the eschatological and Messianic implications of the title are quite evident. But apparently there are not.

The first attack on the long-accepted supposition that Jesus did actually use this title was made by certain scholars who maintained that the words "Son of Man" were impossible from a linguistic standpoint, that such a phrase would not make sense as a title, and that it could only be used in the Aramaic as a circumlocution to express the generic definition of the word "man," except occasionally, and as a devel-

opment of its primary usage; it might also be used as an equivalent for the pronoun of the first person. But its use as a title was an etymological absurdity. This objection enjoyed a considerable vogue until the publication of Professor Dalman's book "The Words of Jesus," wherein he took up this matter, along with others, and investigated it with true Teutonic thoroughness. His verdict was that Jesus might have used this phrase in the "Danielic" sense, i.e., as a personalization of the figure in the book of Daniel, who is the representative of the Jewish nation before the throne of God.* Many critics have not agreed with him in limiting its use to this Danielic sense, but so far there has, apparently, been no objection raised to the phrase as a title since Dalman discussed it.

But other critics have insisted that, in spite of its 69 occurrences in the synoptics, Jesus never used it, at least in a way to claim the Messiahship for himself, basing their contentions on a critical analysis of the records. A good example of this type of attack compressed into a brief presentation may be seen in an article by Carl S. Patton, in the Journal of Religion for September, 1922. Dr. Patton is primarily a pastor, yet he is also an able scholar whose work deserves consideration. His argument may be summarized somewhat as follows:

1. The synoptic gospels represent Jesus as attempting to avoid being known as "the Messiah." This conflicts with the habitual use of a phrase which carried with it an unmis-

takable messianic meaning.

2. In certain instances the phrase can be shown to belong to an editorial observation which has been interpreted as a part of Jesus' conversation.

3. Sometimes the phrase is inserted by Matthew or Luke into a passage which in Mark does not have it. Occasionally these insertions alter or spoil the original meaning of the passage.

4. In many of the passages common to Matthew and Luke and not found in Mark, one of the later evangelists lacks the phrase where the other has it.

5. In other instances where the phrase is common to Matthew and Luke the passage bears evidence of later working over. In other passages the phrase is textually suspicious.

In his article he takes up most of the occurrences of the phrase to be found in the synoptics, and claims to have examined with equal care all those which he does not specifically treat, and his final conclusion is that "to the writer's mind, not one of them is unsuspect."

Also, Professor B. W. Bacon, in an article appearing in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (Vol.XLI, parts I and II, 1922) concludes that in the Second Source "the testimony... is very strong that Jesus himself habitually referred to this 'Coming one' as the Son of Man. But it also indicates plainly enough that he avoided any messianic self-designation." He is convinced, however, that we do have an authentic tradition in Mark to the effect that Jesus used this ti-

tle when referring to his death and rejection, but he seemed to leave the way open to the theory that he used it in a way which merely described his firm conviction that when the Son of Man did come, he and his work would be justified: he did not prove in a conclusive manner that even here it was a self-designation.

On the other hand, there are also those who insist that Jesus could very well have used the title as reported. To be specific, A. M. Sanford replied to Dr. Patton's article in a later number of the same magazine, and argued with much reasonableness for the use on the part of Jesus of this very term which Dr. Patton thought he did not employ.

The long and the short of the situation is this: from the standpoint of mere literary criticism it is absolutely impossible to prove the question one way or the other. We do not have the evidence.

Must we then conclude that this is a problem incapable of solution? Not necessarily, for there may be other evidence than that offered by the exact words of the gospels. And as a matter of fact such evidence does exist. For the message of the early Christian evangelists was that this Jesus whom the Jews had unjustly crucified was arisen, that he was the Christ, and that he would soon return in power and glory to set up his divine kingdom. Whence did these early Christians get this belief? Certainly his life and death was not such as would have convinced them that he was the Messiah and that he would be triumphant over death. In

fact the records show us plainly enough that after the crucifixion they thought that all was over. And, as we have previously noted, suffering and the Messiahship were absolutely incompatible terms in the thought of the first century A. D. It is therefore scarcely possible that there could have been a psychological resurrection, or such an overwhelming conviction of the Messiahship of Jesus, if he himself had not given the disciples a pretty strong conviction of it during his lifetime. And therefore we may conclude with some assurance that Jesus did feel himself to be the Messiah and expressed that conviction at least to his more intimate associates.

But this belief on his part does not necessarily prove that he regarded himself as the Son of Man, but merely as one of the many messianic figures. After his death that was the only role left open for him -- if he were the Messiah at all he would have to be the supernatural, heavenly Son of Man who would return on the clouds of heaven -- and it is at least conceivable that the disciples may have thus interpreted Jesus' claims when his own were of an entirely different nature. Let us therefore attempt to discover just what type of Messiah Jesus thought himself.

III

JESUS' ATTITUDE TO THE "TEMPORAL SOVEREIGN" MESSIAH

We have just shown that in all probability Jesus considered himself the Messiah and expressed that belief to his more intimate disciples. But what did he mean by that title? For as we have seen there was by no means a unanimity of opinion among the Jews as to the person and mission of the Christ. These different opinions, however, could be divided into two main groups; that which expected a human ruler of some kind, and that which believed in a supernatural, divine figure. The first group, as we have pointed out, held to the oldest belief, and were probably in the majority, so let us consider them first.

This Messiah, then, being a human and not a heavenly creature, might have to live some time upon the earth before he was recognized, and there was therefore no obstacle in the way of some man claiming to be this type of a Messiah. In fact, such declarations were not unknown, and there were several occasions when men did make such claims, gathered around them a group of followers, and attempted to set up the messianic kingdom in the vain conviction that God would come to their aid before they should be overthrown. We must therefore face the unpleasant possibility that Jesus was another of these deluded patriots, distinguishable from them chiefly in that he attached unusual importance to moral

principles which he expressed in remarkably forceful language.

Such Messiahs, as we have already noted, might be of three main types; a member of the tribe of Levi, a mighty warrior who should overthrow the Roman Empire, and the son of David. Which, if any, of these was Jesus?

He was not the Levitic messiah, of that we may feel sure, for he never made any such claims, and on the other hand all the evidence and tradition which we possess points to him as a member of the tribe of Judah and a descendant of David.

Was he then the Warrior Prince, he who should drive out the hated Roman overlord, conquer the world, and assure Israel of its coveted "place in the sun?" This is what most of the false messiahs claimed to be, it is what the people greatly desired, and would be the charge most easily explaining his execution by the Romans and the superscription on the cross, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." (Mark: 15:2) Some think he did make this claim, at least to the extent that he wished to fulfill the Socialist program of the class war by persuading the poor and down-trodden of Palestine, and after them the rest of the world, to arise in their might, smite down the oppressive rich, and set up the perfect rule of the proletariat. But such people are very few, and are more interested in economic theories than in New Testament scholarship. For there are some very weighty objections to the belief that Jesus desired to be

the Warrior Prince, and practically none in support of it. At the temptation he refused dominion over the kingdoms of the earth. He told his disciples that they who took by the sword should perish by the sword (Matt.26:52). When a follower of his drew sword to protect him at the time of his arrest, he commanded that it be put up, and then healed the man who had been wounded (Mark 14:47; Luke 22:51-52). He told his followers to love those who hated them and to do good to those who injured them (Matt.5:44). That is certainly unusual war propaganda. In short, we must conclude that Jesus taught love as the one means of conquest, and utterly repudiated the idea of a war-like Messiah. He was not the Warrior Prince, but the Prince of Peace.

There still remains for consideration the Messiah who was the Son of David. Jesus, according to tradition, was a descendant of David. Bartimaeus hailed him as the son of David (Mark 10:46-49). The crowd so acclaimed him at the triumphal entry (Mark 11:9-10; Matt.21:9). He promised the twelve, if we may credit the record, twelve thrones on which they may sit, governing the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt.19:28; Luke 22:30), which sounds as if he considered himself the ruler of Israel. All these would certainly seem to indicate very strongly that Jesus did look upon himself as fulfilling the old prophecies concerning the son of David.

But this is not all. In Mark 12:35-37 Jesus asks the scribes how it was that they said the Christ was David's son when David himself calls him Lord. We may doubt the accuracy

of ascribing Psalm 110 to David, and may discount the value of such rabbinic argument, but the fact remains that Jesus is here calling into question the time-honored belief that the Christ was indeed the son of David. And if he so regarded himself, it is very improbable indeed that he would have gone out of his way to refute his own claim. And again we have the temptation story where he refused the kingdoms of this earth and their glory.

As a result of this conflicting evidence there is a corresponding conflict of opinions among present-day scholars. But all are practically agreed that Jesus, if he did adopt the title of the son of David, did not do so in any crassly material sense. Professor Bacon seems to think that Jesus used the title as describing himself while here on earth when he demanded from his disciples unswerving loyalty to himself as the Messiah, and that he fundamentally modified the whole conception by identifying the son of David and the Son of Man concepts. E. F. Scott also thinks that Jesus thought of himself as fulfilling the prophecies concerning the son of David, but as doing so much as he fulfilled the Law, that is, by universalizing it and spiritualizing it, thus purging it from its crude materialism and Jewish exclusivism. This may be so, but it would almost seem that after he had done this the whole concept would have been so re-made and altered as to be absolutely beyond recognition.

At least we can agree upon so much:

1. Jesus could not have been the Levitic Messiah, for our records agree in stating that he never claimed the title, and whatever tradition we do have describes him as a member of the tribe of Judah, not of Levi.

2. He utterly repudiated the role of a Warrior Prince.

3. His laying claim to the title of the son of David is doubtful, and, if he did make any such claim, it was in a universalistic and spiritualized sense which practically abrogated the older idea of the office in favor of a new conception.

IV

JESUS AS THE SON OF MAN

One living in our day, who has a knowledge of modern science, and is acquainted with the general trend of present-day thought, must think the fundamental ideas upon which the Son of Man concept was based strange, bizarre, almost insane. The belief that the world shall come to a cataclysmic end, caused by the direct interference in the realm of nature of God himself, because the world would be so thoroughly wicked that it had passed endurance; that God would then send a superhuman emissary who should destroy all the wicked, judge all who had ever lived (for the dead were to arise from their graves) and sentence them as their lives had merited, the righteous to eternal bliss, and the wicked to everlasting punishment, and then rule with perfect wisdom and righteousness the kingdom wherein the saints should dwell: this whole system of thought is so strange and incomprehensible that it scarcely seems possible that any one in his right mind should ever have believed it. And when one is told not only that this was a fairly common belief in a certain part of the world in an age noted for its culture, and in a country so situated that it could not but feel the effects of this culture, but that in addition a certain man who since that time has been more universally respected than any other person in the annals of history, claimed that

office of divine emissary for himself, he is pretty sure to feel that some one must be crazy. And when he is further informed that this man was the son of a carpenter, that he was a poor man, that his life was filled with suffering, and that he was finally executed after a hasty or illegal trial because he was feared by the big politicians -- in fine, that his life was all that was contrary to the conception of the office whose title he assumed, -- he is more sure of it than ever.

Yet such was the case in the age just following the rule of Augustus, the so-called golden age of Rome. The country was Palestine. And the man was Jesus of Nazareth.

For, as we have seen, Jesus must have considered himself the messiah, yet he had rejected the role of Warrior Prince, and so modified the conception of the son of David that no one, either his disciples or even himself, could have recognized it unless he had connected it with some other well-known messianic office. Now the only other conception, as we have seen, is that of the Son of Man.

Besides arriving at such a judgment by process of elimination, there are also some other factors which point to the same conclusion. The first is the reported use of the title by Jesus, and the frequency with which the synoptic evangelists apply it to him. This is particularly noteworthy because the title seldom appears elsewhere in the New Testament. As has been previously stated, the synoptists use the phrase "Son of Man" 69 times. It occurs twelve times

in the Gospel according to John, in spite of the fact that the author prefers what he considers the cognate title of Son of God. But there are only three other occurrences of these words in all the rest of the New Testament, and there is considerable doubt whether one of these is a title or refers to Jesus. And so in spite of the attempts of some authorities to prove that Jesus never used "Son of Man" as a self-designation, we would almost be forced to the conclusion that there must have been some occasion when Jesus used it in a way which applied it to himself. It would hardly seem possible to account for the number and distribution of the occurrences in any other manner.

Further, recognition must be made of the apocalyptic element throughout the teachings of Jesus. Here again some scholars have tried to deny this element in Jesus' teachings. They have said that Jesus taught a gradual development of the kingdom. But it must be pointed out that the "kingdom" is one idea upon which all the apocalyptists agreed. The various portraits of it might differ in detail, but the kingdom was the center of the whole apocalyptic hope; it was almost a technical term. It must also be noted that the whole conception of evolution which bulks so large in all our present-day thought is a nineteenth century product. A few of the old Greek philosophers did indeed achieve some conception of the theory, but it died with them, and so far as we know, it never entered Palestine. It is conceivable, of course, that Jesus could have thought out the idea of a gradually de-

veloping kingdom independently, but if so he certainly did not implant it very firmly in the minds of his disciples, and the parables, such as that of the leaven and the grain of mustard seed, which have been most commonly appealed to as showing his doctrine of a slowly developing kingdom, most probably were meant to illustrate merely the mysterious coming of the kingdom which no man can control and no one comprehends. The kingdom must therefore be regarded as an apocalyptic kingdom. And no scholarship can erase the kingdom from the teachings of Jesus on the plea that his teachings were ethical and not eschatological, for the kingdom constantly appears in some of the most strongly ethical passages in the gospels, e.g., the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes.

And so, whether we are pleased with the conclusion or not, apparently we must admit that Jesus regarded himself as the Son of Man. But the question then arises, and it is a very insistent question, "How could any man in his right mind make such a preposterous claim as to call himself the Son of Man, particularly when the whole course of his life was the exact antithesis of what might have been expected for one of such exalted personality and with such a mission?" Well, let us see. Certainly there must have been some experience or some constant factor in his life which would account for this claim of his, and perhaps the gospels, in spite of their unquestioning assumption that he was the messiah, may give us some explanation for his use of the title.

When did Jesus first reach the conclusion that he was the messiah? If the story of his adventure in the temple at the age of twelve is authentic, he apparently had a very unusual sense of a remarkably close relationship with the Father. But even this would not prove that he was conscious of any messianic mission, and the story is at least a doubtful tradition. Others claim that the consciousness of his messianic office developed very gradually, and that it did not become definite in his mind until just before the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. The most satisfactory hypothesis, however, is that from early in his life he had enjoyed a very strong and unique sense of communion with God as his Father. Gradually he was forced to recognize the unique character of this relationship, and at his baptism he became suddenly aware of the fact that he was the Chosen One, he who should bring in his Father's kingdom. Only in this way, I think, can we reasonably interpret this experience. "Coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens rent asunder, and the Spirit, as a dove, descending upon him: and a voice came out of the heavens, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.'" (Mark 1:10-11) It was probably a subjective experience which Jesus told the disciples in a somewhat symbolical form, as befitted such an event. In short, his messianic self-consciousness was a direct product of his sense of the Fatherhood of God.

This does not mean that Jesus at that moment suddenly perceived the full implications of this experience. On the

contrary, the story of the Temptation, probably another bit of symbolical autobiography, shows that he had to face definitely certain conceptions of the task of the Messiah. First, - we will use the Lukan order here, - he was tempted to turn the stones into bread. It is a little puzzling at first to see what relationship such a miracle might have to his messianic mission. But as Dr. McCown points out, there was a wide-spread belief that the messianic age would mark a return to the golden days of old when the earth would bring forth fruit in miraculous abundance, and want would be no more. Should he not use his powers as the messiah to fulfill this hope and miraculously banish poverty from the world? But this was a concession to materialism which Jesus saw would destroy the vital spiritual goal of his mission, so he rejected it. The second was the offer of the kingdoms of the earth. This was obviously the temptation to declare himself the temporal sovereign, such as we have discussed, of a kingdom based either on military force or overwhelming spiritual power. But in this also Jesus saw the subtle snare of personal ambition and nationalistic hopes, so this he also refused. The third temptation was the most subtle of all: why not show himself to be the divine Son of Man by some miraculous sign, and thus bring in the highly spiritualistic kingdom which the Son of Man was expected to inaugurate? To one of his idealistic and mystical temperament this must have been a very sharp temptation indeed. But here Jesus refused to make trial of the Lord his God, to attempt to "force God's

hand," and decided to trust his Father in heaven. But even after this experience the tempter left him only "for a season."

Jesus therefore appreciated the difficulties in the way of his messiahship, yet he accepted the offer. Why? Chiefly, I think, because he could not do otherwise and still have an adequate description of his mission. He was convinced that the kingdom was at hand. He was also convinced that his one task in life was to preach the kingdom. And finally he was gradually made to realize that his relationship with the Father was absolutely unique. He felt to the bottom of his soul that there could not possibly be a closer relationship than that which he had with God. And so the thought that there could be any one who could be more acceptable as God's representative on earth, the belief that he was merely a forerunner of another who should bring in the kingdom, was to him, in spite of all his humility, an utter impossibility. In the very nature of things it simply could not be. The only solution to the problem was that in some way, which probably he could not comprehend, he would be the one to set up the kingdom, in other words he was forced to conclude that he must be the messiah. And so he accepted the office, probably with much hesitancy, and by no means sure of just what it would involve or how he should fulfill its duties. He accepted it, but he did not publish the fact abroad, nor even, in all probability, speak of it definitely to his disciples

until quite late in his ministry.

It was apparently at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus first admitted to any one besides himself that he was the messiah. If, as we have thought probable, he was for long doubtful concerning the implications of his messiahship, why did he now admit it to others, even his closest friends, who were still, as he well knew, largely controlled by the cruder forms of the messianic hope? (Cf. Mark 10:35-45) We may be helped at this point by noting that from here on, and not before, Jesus seems to have begun definitely to apply to himself the title "Son of Man," and that in these passages he particularly stresses the idea that "the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31) The account may not be strictly true to the facts in attributing to Jesus such an exact prediction of the details of his death and resurrection, but there are enough other instances of somewhat the same tenor to assure us that Jesus did foresee the probability, if not the certainty, of his death, and that he definitely connected his rejection and death with his messianic mission.

Now this was an entirely new idea. As we have taken particular pains to emphasize, the Jews did not interpret the Suffering Servant passages of II Isaiah as having the slightest messianic connotation. On the contrary, the messiah, as the vice-regent of God, must show forth God's

glory and power. He must have authority and majesty far beyond that of merely human monarchs. And it was therefore obvious that he was one who enjoyed eternal felicity, and who was never touched by the slightest hint of suffering or trouble. Yet Jesus, entirely on his own responsibility, and flying in the very face of the fundamental conception of the messiah, insisted that the messiah must suffer. How ingrained the other belief was is well shown by Peter's rebuke of Jesus after he had predicted his death, by the dispute among the disciples as to which of them was to be the greatest in the kingdom (Mark 9:33-35) and the request of the sons of Zebedee and their mother. Just how Jesus came to conceive this we do not know.

The early Church seized upon the Servant passages and interpreted them as predictions of the life and death of Jesus. Many critics think that the church learned this usage through Jesus' own employment of them, and they also see in certain passages, (e.g., the words at the baptism, Mark 1:11) indirect quotations from these chapters. Again they point out that Jesus quotes other passages from Isaiah, and it is therefore by all means probable that he would be well acquainted with the Servant chapters also. On the other hand, the fact can not be blinked that nowhere in the gospels, at least before the resurrection, is there any statement or word of Jesus to show that he used Old Testament prophecy in general or II Isaiah in particular, to prove that the messiah must suffer disgrace and death. And certainly it would seem

almost certain, in the light of the later usage of the church, that if he had used such passages they would have been recorded. Here again, we must admit, is another problem which we can not answer as definitely as we should wish. Whether Jesus reached this conception by an absolutely novel exegesis of some scripture passage, or whether he came to this conclusion solely on the strength of his own experience and judgment of the future course of events, we can not say, but we do know this: that he did come to this conviction of the necessity of a suffering messiah.

But he could not leave the matter there. His sense of his mission was too strong for him to concede for a moment that his death would end his part in the coming of the kingdom. Even a post mortem influence exerted through the mediacy of his disciples, would not be enough. His sense of his share in the future kingdom, and his trust in the Father, was so compelling that nothing less than a living personal influence would satisfy him. He did not believe that his Father could deny him that. The solution, as he saw it, lay in the Son of Man concept. At present he was no more than a prophet, so far as actual power was concerned, and destined to meet the fate of so many of the prophets of old, that of martyrdom and rejection. But after his death the way was open for a return in glory as the Son of Man. He would return shortly with power and glory to enter into his kingdom, and his present ministry, with its shortcomings and apparent failure, would be justified. Far-fetched, visionary, im-

possible for any mind which was not fundamentally insane? Such must certainly be the verdict upon any one who today, in this matter-of-fact Western World, should give any indication of such a self-estimation. But Jesus was an Oriental, with a very strong, if well-controlled mystical nature, who was living in an atmosphere alive with these expectations. There was no reason in the minds of the Jews which would make this belief impossible. It is therefore no wonder that he should have arrived at what, to a Westerner, would have been an impossible belief. In fact the wonder is that he kept as sane and well-balanced as he did, and did not try to set himself up as a son of David as did so many others.

Jesus, we have said, was unique in his conception of the suffering messiah. How did it happen that he felt compelled to make this great change? Some claim that it was purely what psychologists call a "defense mechanism," that is, he realized that he could not continue preaching and teaching those things which he was convinced were essential without so antagonizing the Jewish leaders that they, in self-defense, would eventually kill him. Others suggest that he might have expected the kingdom some time previously --e.g., when he sent out the seventy,-- but that its continued failure to appear had convinced him that the cup of iniquity was not yet full, and that he might well have believed that the execution of the messiah by the Jewish leaders would fill it to overflowing, and thus persuade God to bring in the kingdom without further delay. And then, of course, there is the

old orthodox belief, that he expected his death in some magical way to be a sacrificial atonement for the sins of the world. Here again our evidence is too scanty to enable us to reach a very definite conclusion, but we can at least be reasonably sure of this, that in some way Jesus expected his death to bring the present age to a quick end and usher in the new age with himself as the Christ, the Son of Man.

V

SUMMARY

This short, very short and scanty, treatment of this topic has shown us that there are many questions which we can not answer definitely. To some of these we can supply probable solutions, to others we must confess complete ignorance. Are there then any conclusions of importance to which we may point with a fair assurance that they are essentially sound? I dare to think there are, and that they may be summed up somewhat as follows:

- I. The Jews believed almost universally in an apocalyptic kingdom which might be introduced in one of several ways:
 1. By God directly.
 2. By a messiah who was to be a human ruler endowed with divine powers. He was to be
 - a. A descendant of David (this was the most popular conception of all) or
 - b. A member of the tribe of Levi (this did not endure for any great time) or
 - c. A Warrior Prince. This was originally a separate conception, but was frequently combined in popular thought with the son of David.

3. By a messiah who was a heavenly, supernatural being, sometimes considered pre-existent, whose most common designation was "the Son of Man."
4. The Jews had no idea of a suffering messiah at this time. The Servant passages in II Isaiah were not supposed to have any messianic significance.

- II. Jesus did believe himself to be the messiah, as a result of his sense of fellowship with the Father and of the immanence of the kingdom.
- III. He could not be the Levitic messiah, he definitely rejected the mission of the Warrior Prince, and, if he accepted it at all, greatly modified and spiritualized the office of the son of David.
- IV. Jesus accepted the title of Son of Man as the only other role for his messianic consciousness.
- V. To this he added on his own responsibility the conception of a suffering messiah. The exact reason for this we do not know, further than that he was convinced that his death was essential to the coming of the kingdom.
- VI. Soon after his death he expected to return as the Son of Man and set up the messianic kingdom.

Some people rebel at these conclusions. It is obvious that, if they are true, then Jesus was mistaken in his expectations, for he has not returned on the clouds of heaven,

to inaugurate the new age and found the messianic kingdom; and that, they feel, degrades Jesus to the status of a mere deluded fanatic. Such a conclusion entirely leaves out of account the entire atmosphere in which Jesus lived. Also it leaves out of account the motive and reason which constrained Jesus to accept the title of the Son of Man. For that was the overwhelming conviction that he must be a living, vital, personality and influence in the coming of the kingdom. Just how that would be accomplished he was willing to trust to the Father, but the only explanation he could conceive of, living as he did in an apocalyptically laden atmosphere, was the idea of the Son of Man. The explanation was wrong, but essentially he was right; for he has been just such an influence, though, I think we may say, in an even greater measure, and in a more spiritual and effective way than if he had come as he expected. The fact did not fall below, but exceeded, his expectations. He is truly the Son of Man, the divine founder of the kingdom of God.

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